



US009171923B2

(12) **United States Patent**
Edwards et al.

(10) **Patent No.:** **US 9,171,923 B2**
(45) **Date of Patent:** **Oct. 27, 2015**

(54) **METHOD OF FABRICATING A GALLIUM NITRIDE MERGED P-I-N SCHOTTKY (MPS) DIODE**

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(*) Notice: Subject to any disclaimer, the term of this patent is extended or adjusted under 35 U.S.C. 154(b) by 0 days.

(21) Appl. No.: **14/299,773**

(22) Filed: **Jun. 9, 2014**

(65) **Prior Publication Data**

US 2014/0287570 A1 Sep. 25, 2014

Related U.S. Application Data

(62) Division of application No. 13/270,625, filed on Oct. 11, 2011, now Pat. No. 8,778,788.

(51) **Int. Cl.**
H01L 21/04 (2006.01)
H01L 29/66 (2006.01)
(Continued)

(52) **U.S. Cl.**
CPC **H01L 29/66143** (2013.01); **H01L 21/046** (2013.01); **H01L 21/0495** (2013.01);
(Continued)

(58) **Field of Classification Search**
CPC H01L 21/041; H01L 21/0415; H01L 21/0425; H01L 21/0435; H01L 21/0455; H01L 29/66204

See application file for complete search history.

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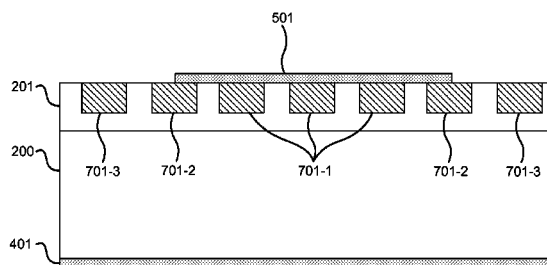
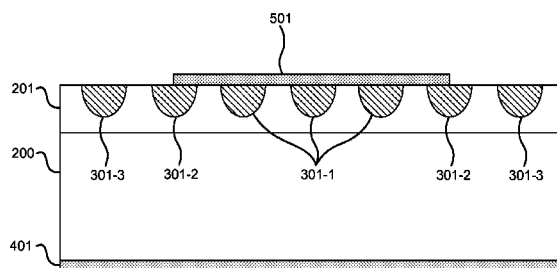
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(57) **ABSTRACT**

A semiconductor structure includes a III-nitride substrate with a first side and a second side opposing the first side. The III-nitride substrate is characterized by a first conductivity type and a first dopant concentration. The semiconductor structure also includes a III-nitride epitaxial structure including a first III-nitride epitaxial layer coupled to the first side of the III-nitride substrate and a plurality of III-nitride regions of a second conductivity type. The plurality of III-nitride regions have at least one III-nitride epitaxial region of the first conductivity type between each of the plurality of III-nitride regions. The semiconductor structure further includes a first metallic structure electrically coupled to one or more of the plurality of III-nitride regions and the at least one III-nitride epitaxial region. A Schottky contact is created between the first metallic structure and the at least one III-nitride epitaxial region.

18 Claims, 17 Drawing Sheets



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- CPC *H01L29/2003* (2013.01); *H01L 29/47* (2013.01); *H01L 29/475* (2013.01); *H01L 29/868* (2013.01); *H01L 29/872* (2013.01)

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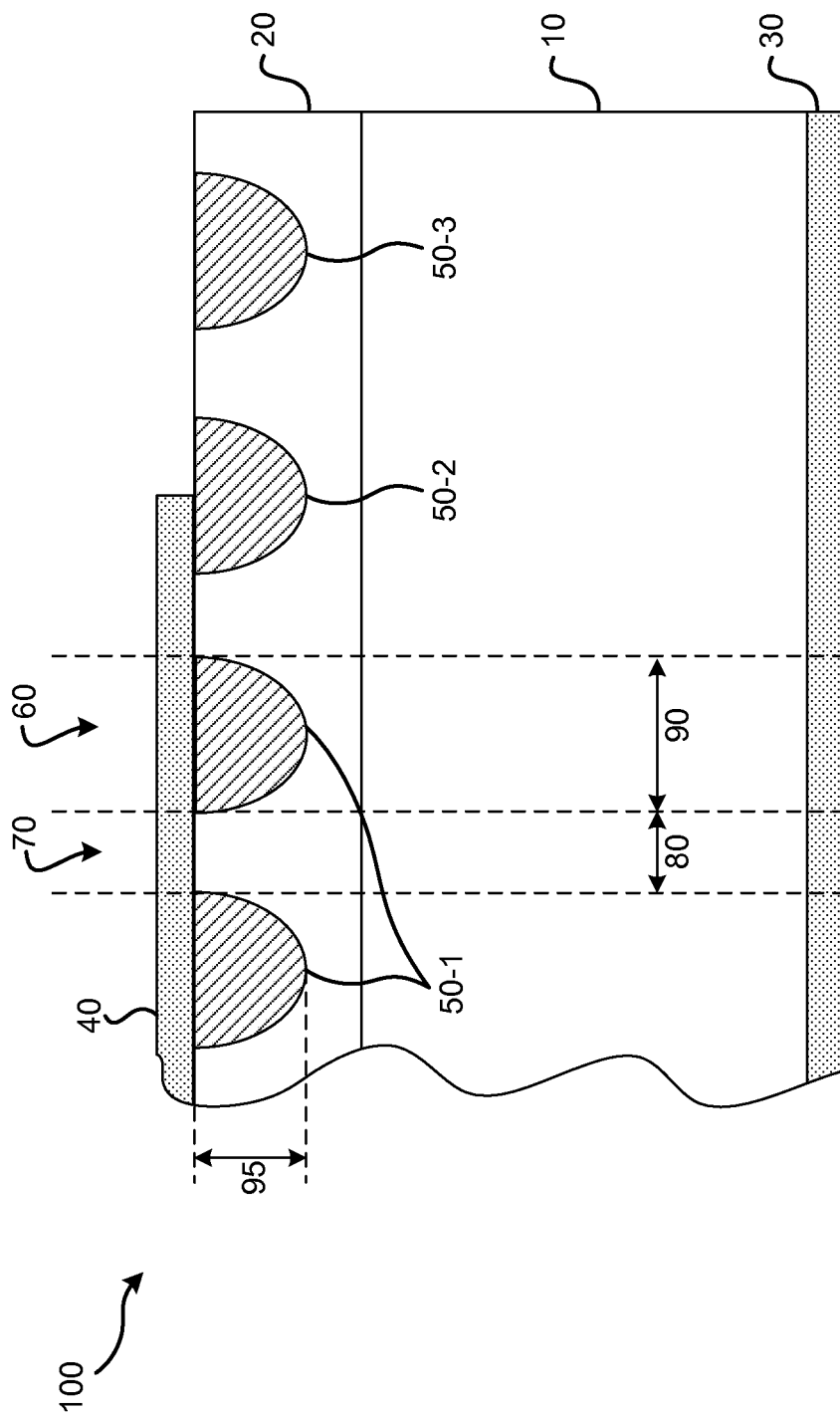


FIG. 1

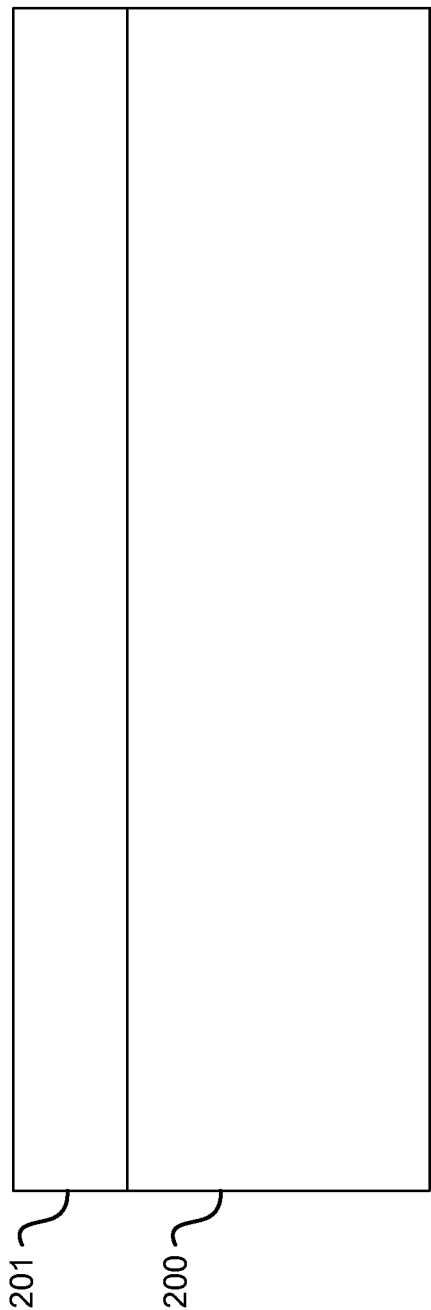


FIG. 2

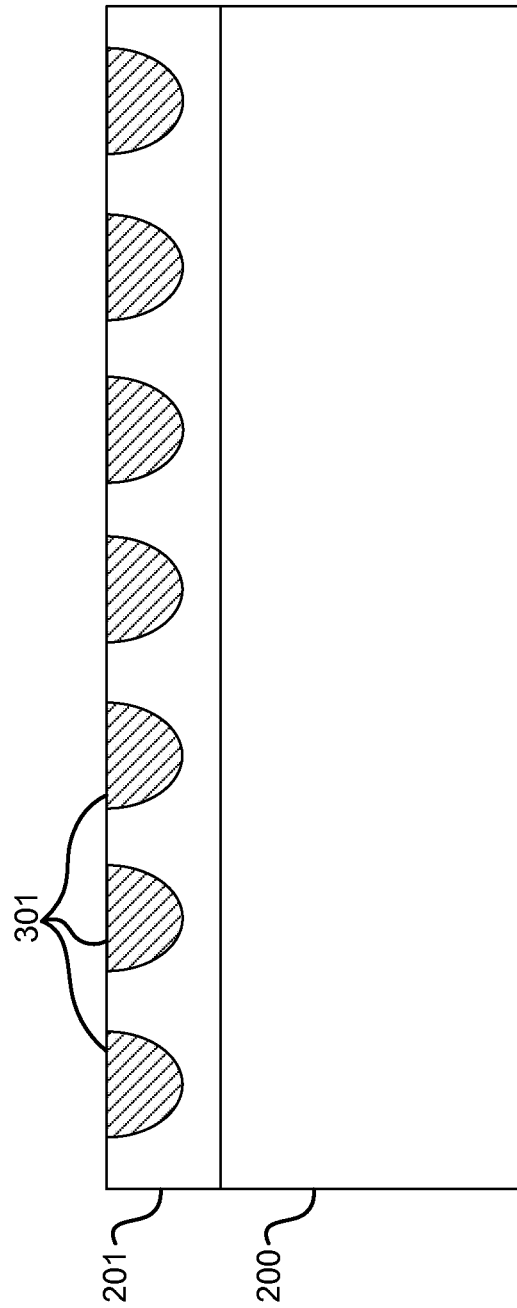


FIG. 3

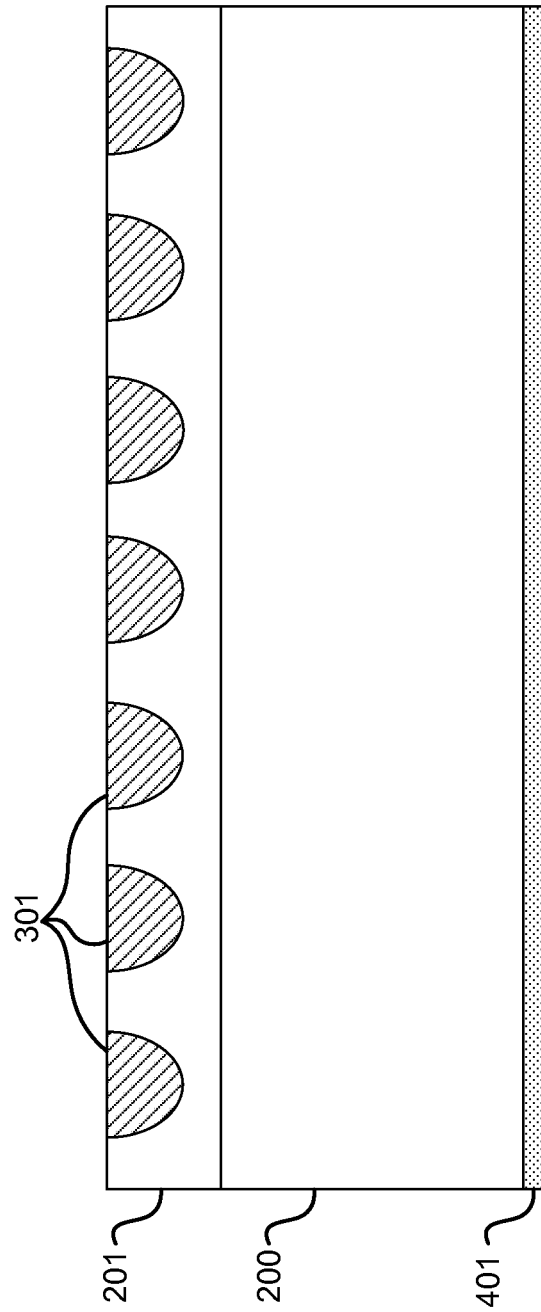


FIG. 4

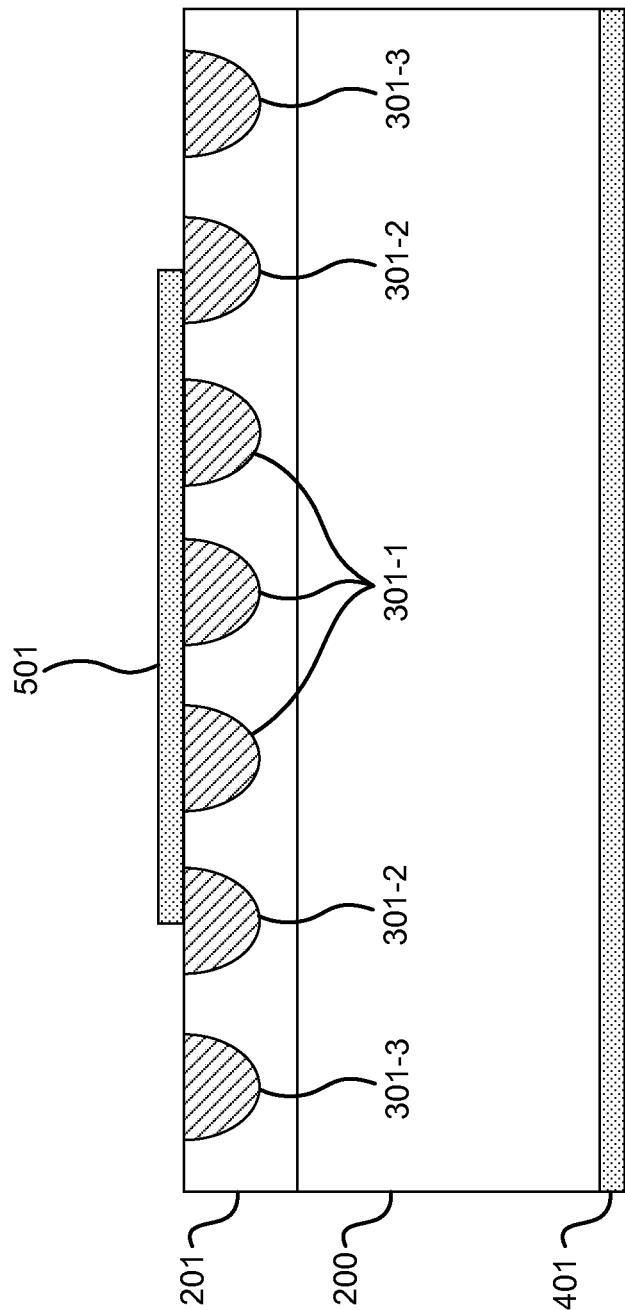


FIG. 5

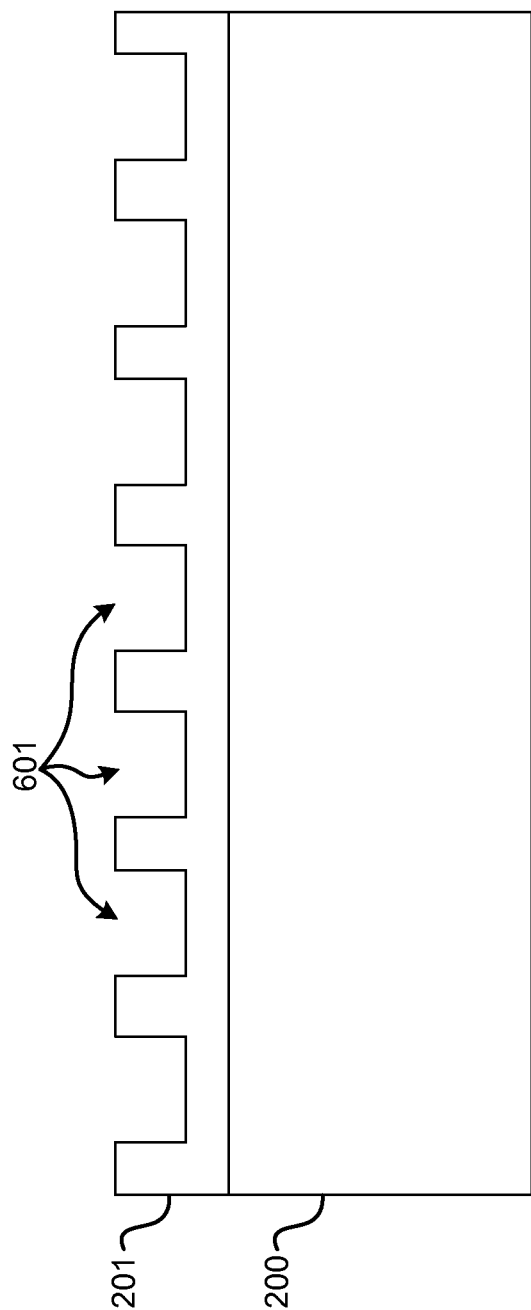


FIG. 6

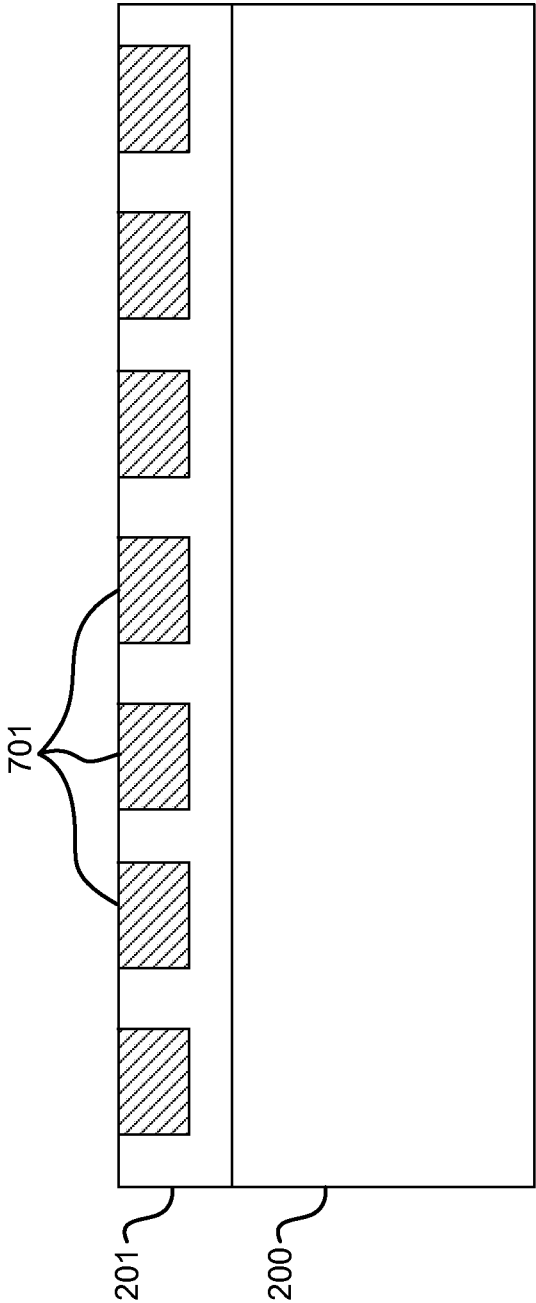


FIG. 7

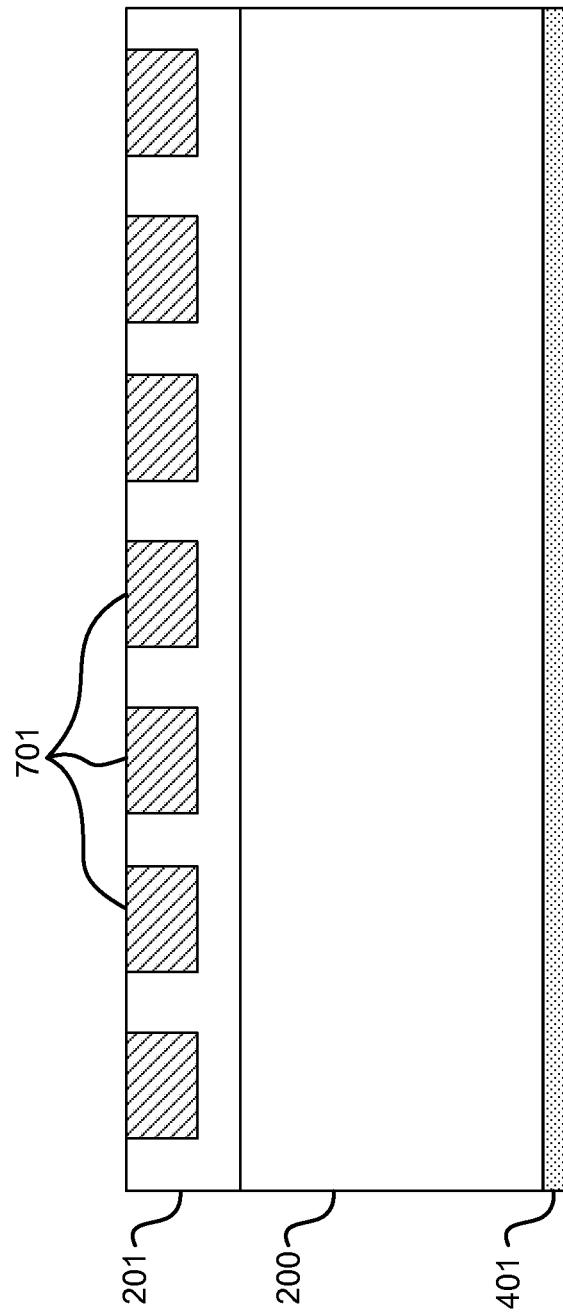


FIG. 8

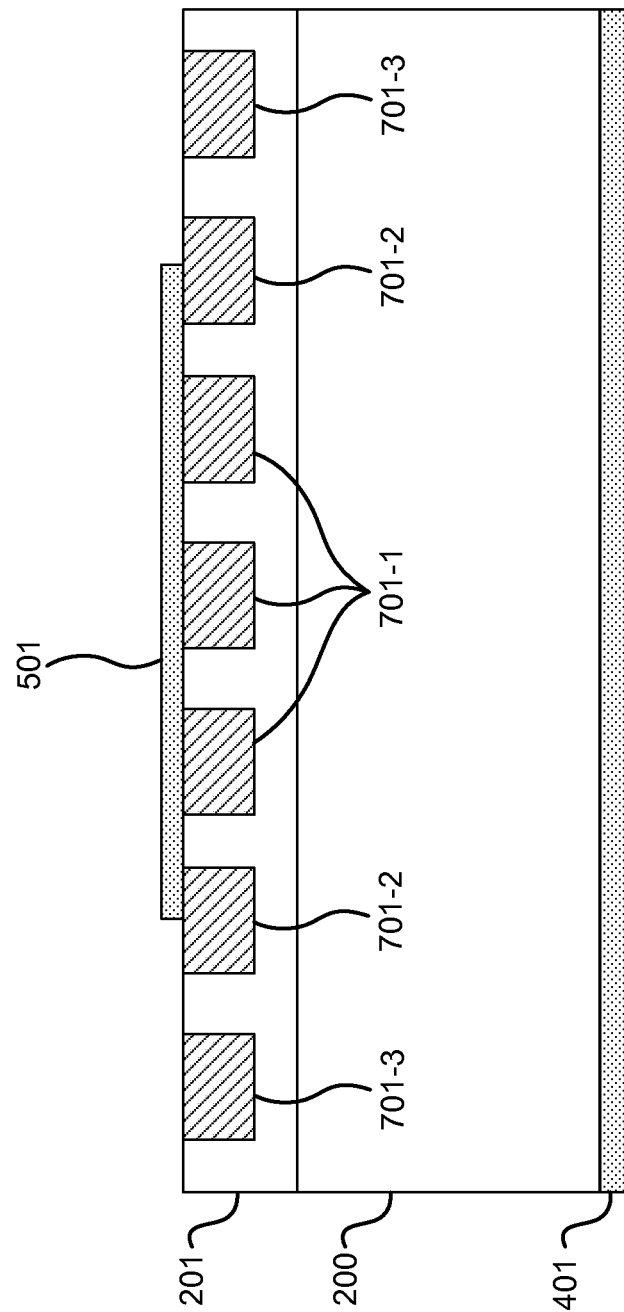


FIG. 9

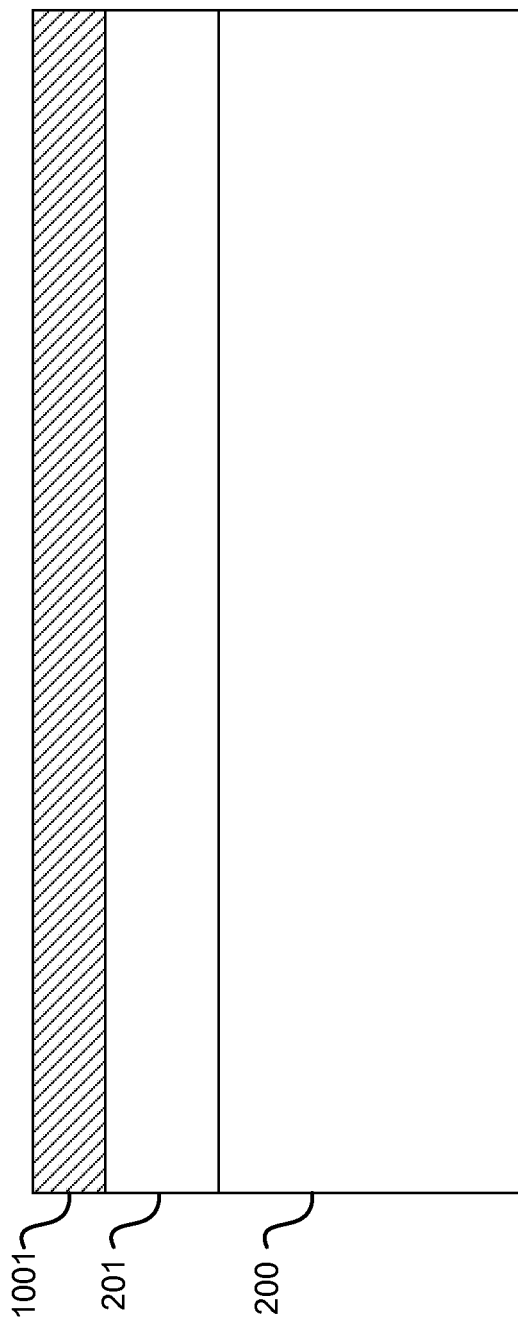


FIG. 10

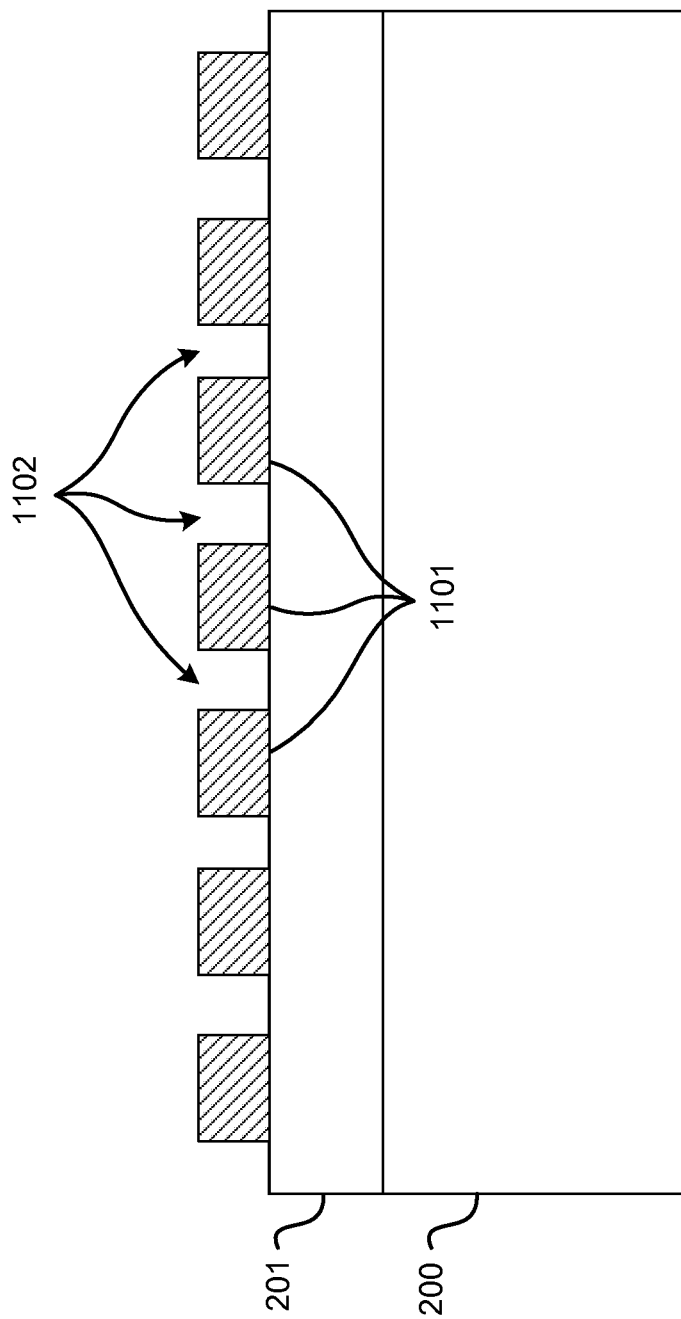


FIG. 11

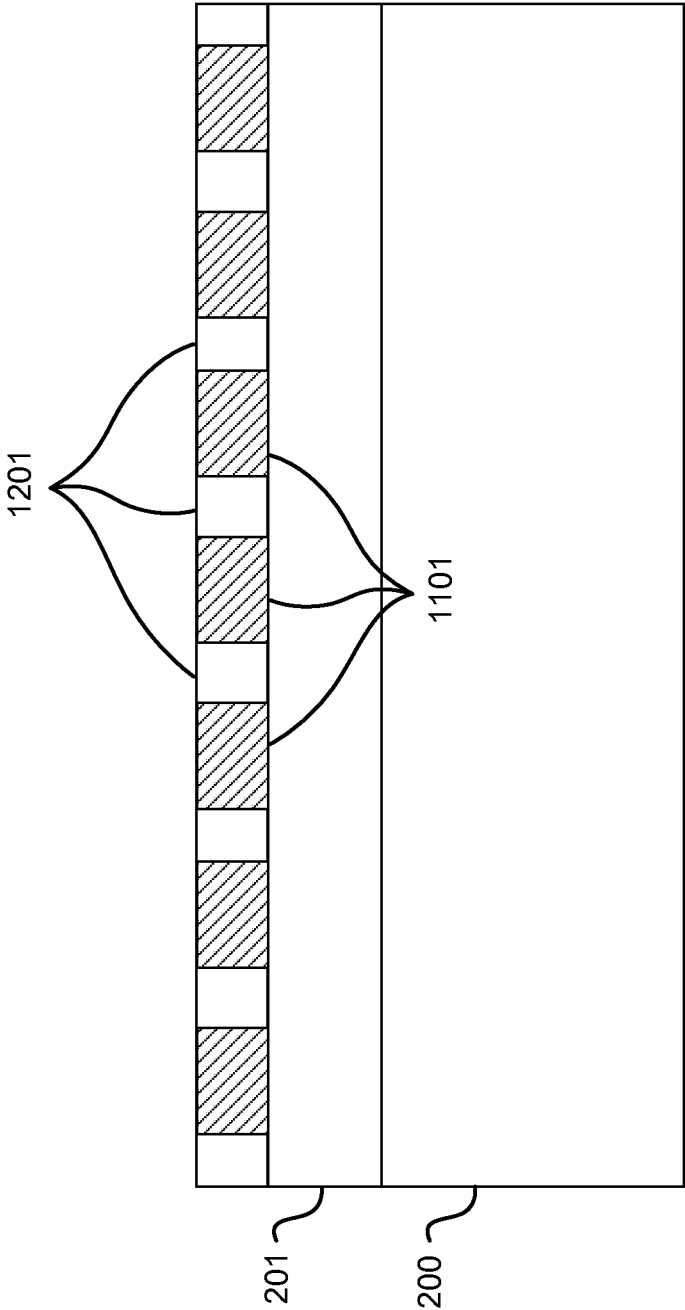


FIG. 12

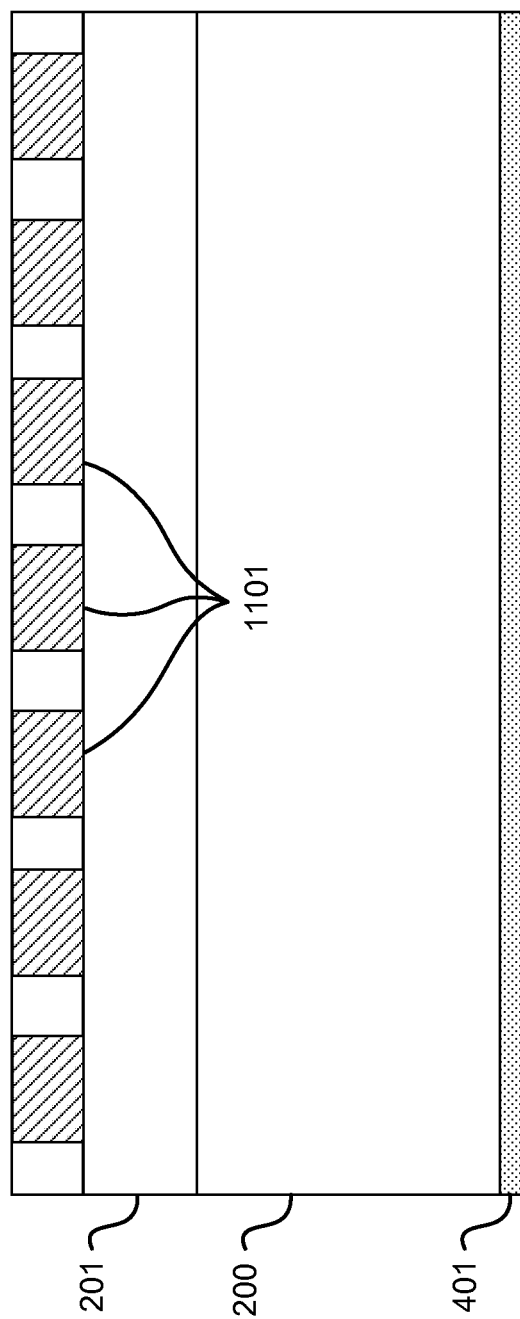


FIG. 13

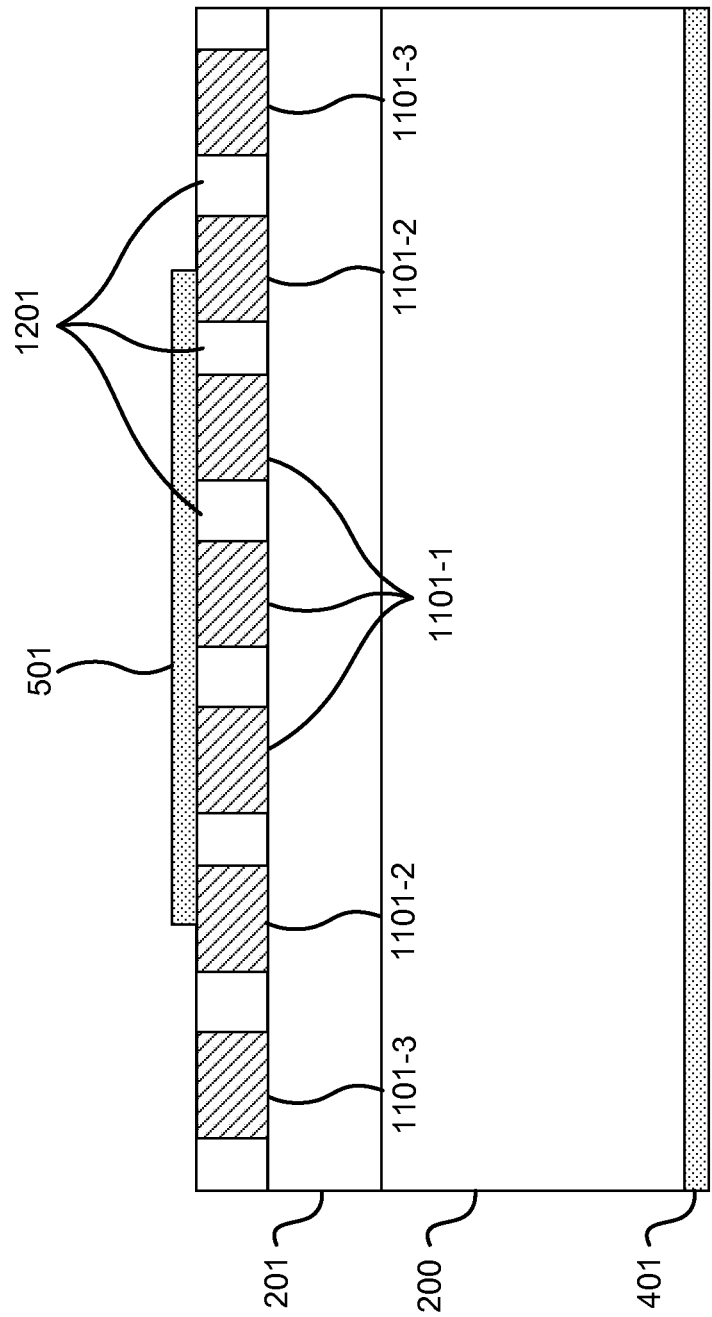
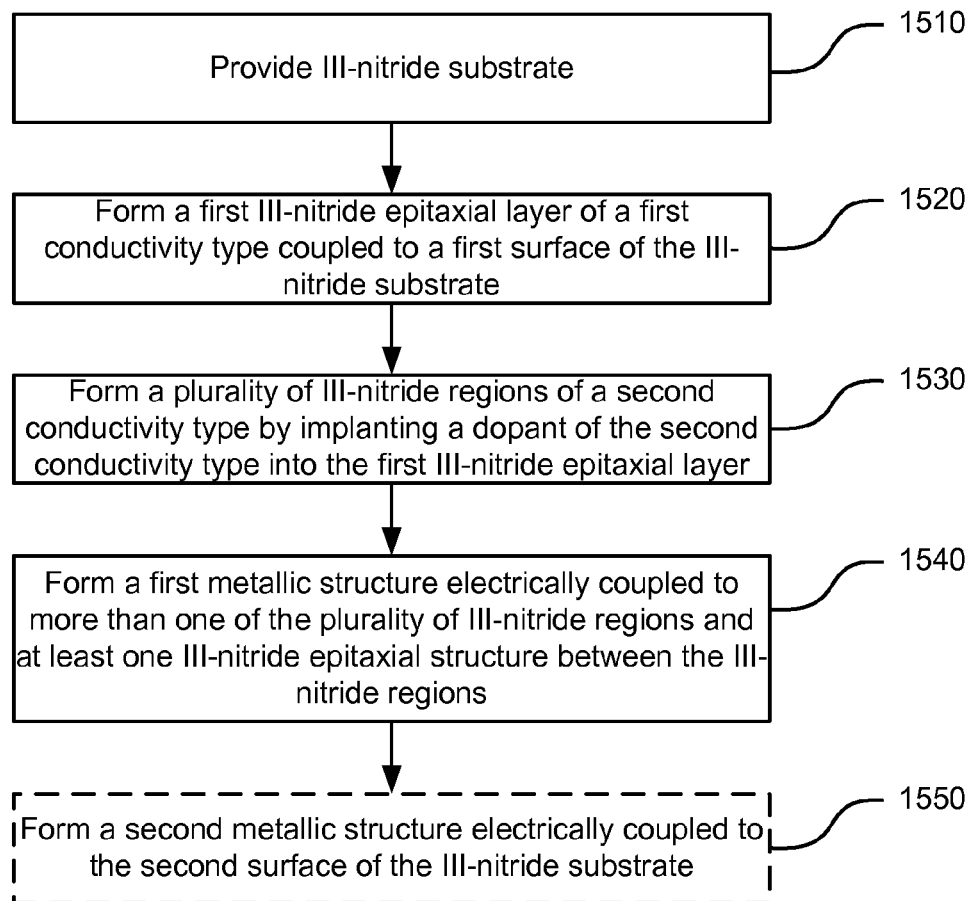
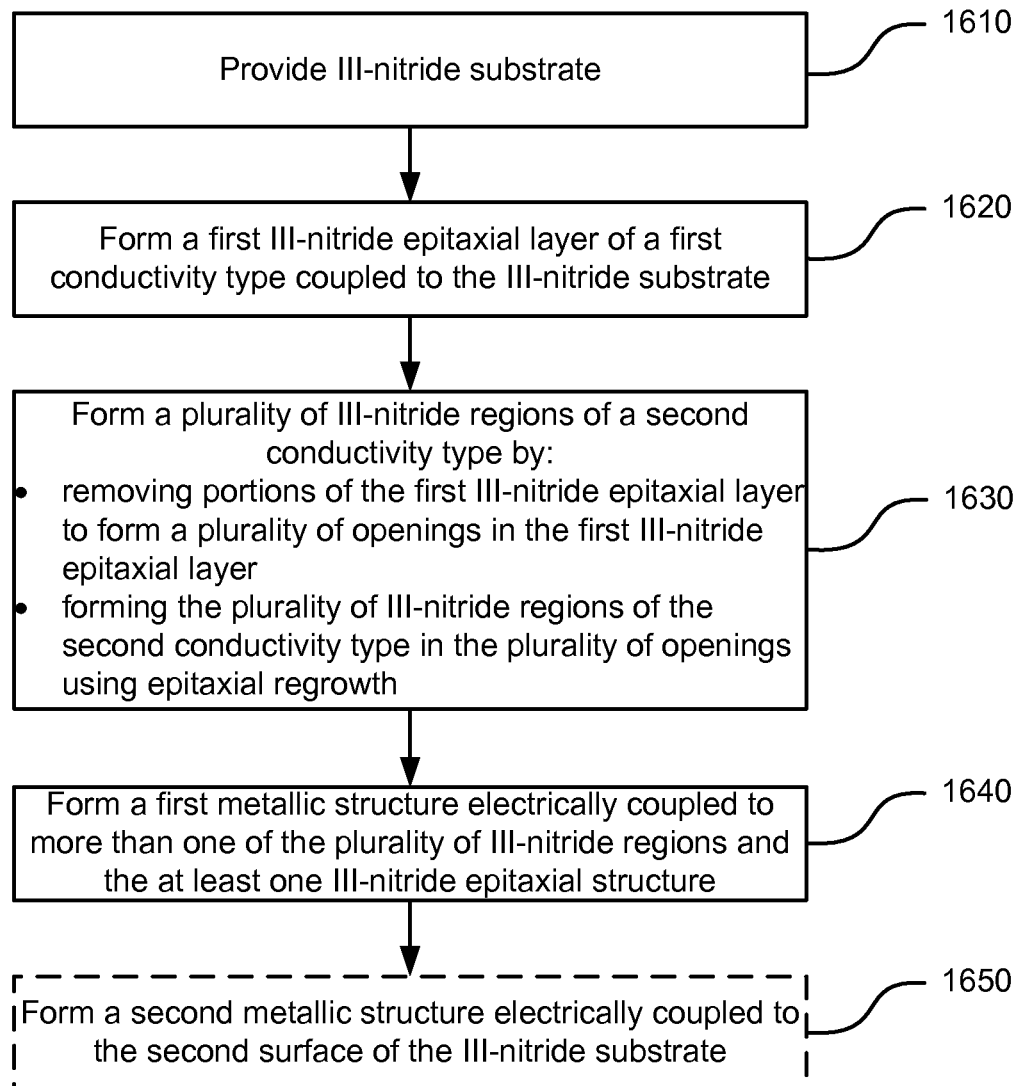
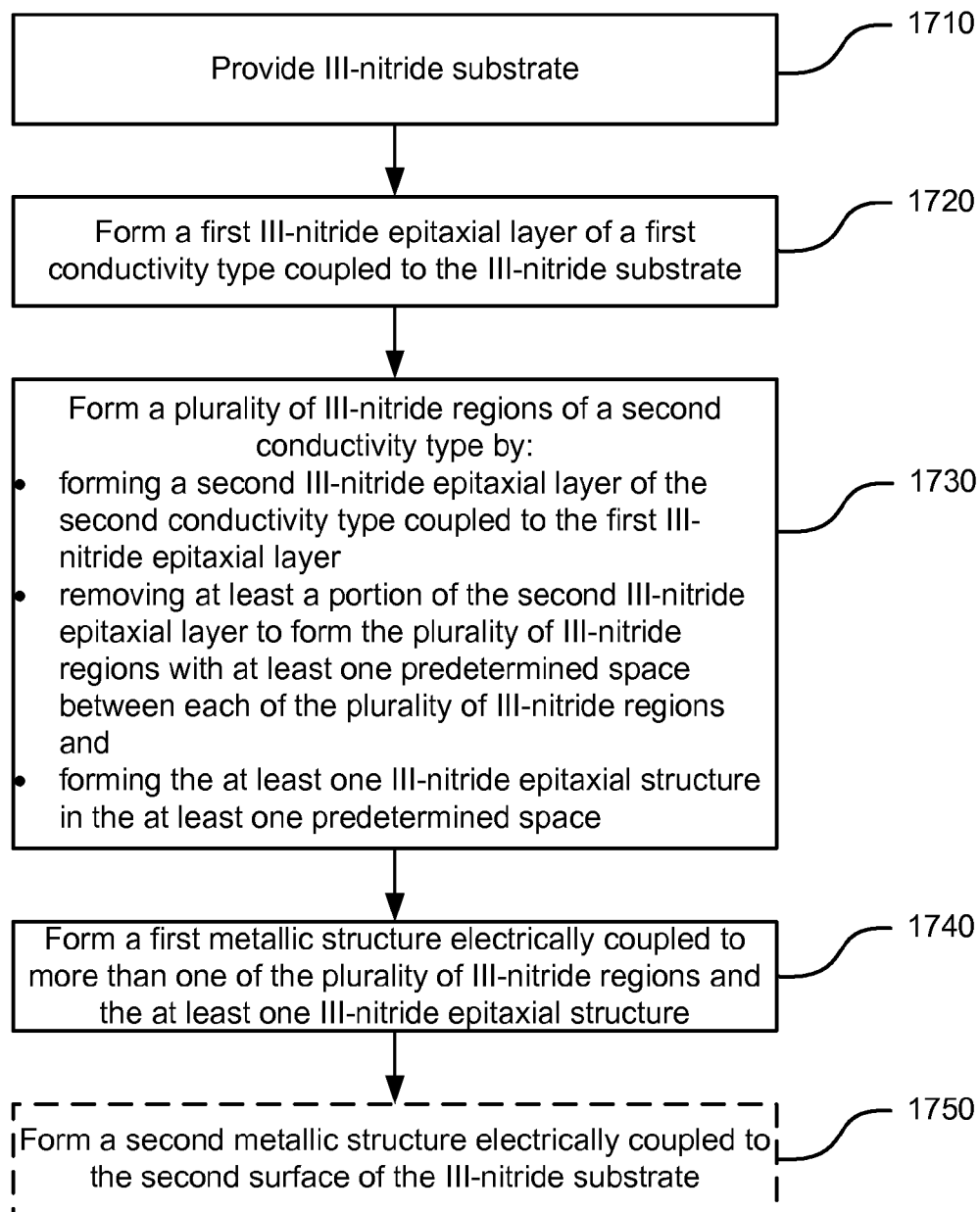


FIG. 14

**FIG. 15**

**FIG. 16**

**FIG. 17**

1

METHOD OF FABRICATING A GALLIUM NITRIDE MERGED P-I-N SCHOTTKY (MPS) DIODE

CROSS-REFERENCES TO RELATED APPLICATIONS

The present application is a divisional of U.S. application Ser. No. 13/270,625, filed Oct. 11, 2011, which is incorporated herein by reference in its entirety for all purposes. This application is also related to U.S. patent application Ser. No. 13/270,606, filed Oct. 11, 2011, and U.S. patent application Ser. No. 13/270,641, filed Oct. 11, 2011, both of which are incorporated herein by reference in their entirety for all purposes.

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

Power electronics are widely used in a variety of applications. Power electronic devices are commonly used in circuits to modify the form of electrical energy, for example, from AC to DC, from one voltage level to another, or in some other way. Such devices can operate over a wide range of power levels, from milliwatts in mobile devices to hundreds of megawatts in a high voltage power transmission system. Despite the progress made in power electronics, there is a need in the art for improved electronics systems and methods of operating the same.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

The present invention relates generally to electronic devices. More specifically, the present invention relates to forming merged P-i-N Schottky (MPS) diodes using III-nitride semiconductor materials. Merely by way of example, the invention has been applied to methods and systems for manufacturing MPS diodes using gallium-nitride (GaN) based epitaxial layers. These MPS diodes can be used in a range of applications that can benefit from a high-voltage switch with low capacitance and very low leakage current in the off state.

According to an embodiment of the present invention, a method for fabricating a merged P-i-N Schottky (MPS) diode in gallium nitride (GaN) based materials is provided. The method includes providing a n-type GaN-based substrate with a first surface and a second surface and forming an n-type GaN-based epitaxial layer coupled to the first surface of the n-type GaN-based substrate. The method also includes forming a GaN structure having plurality of p-type GaN-based regions with at least one n-type GaN-based epitaxial region disposed between each of the plurality of p-type GaN-based regions. The method further includes forming a first metallic structure electrically coupled to one or more of the plurality of p-type GaN-based regions and the at least one n-type GaN-based epitaxial region. A Schottky contact is created between the first metallic structure and the at least one n-type GaN-based epitaxial region.

According to an embodiment of the present invention, a method for fabricating an epitaxial structure is provided. The method includes providing a III-nitride substrate of a first conductivity type with a first surface and a second surface, and forming a first III-nitride epitaxial layer of the first conductivity type coupled to the first surface of the III-nitride substrate. The method also includes forming a plurality of III-nitride regions of a second conductivity type with at least one III-nitride epitaxial structure of the first conductivity type between each of the plurality of III-nitride regions. The

2

method further includes forming a first metallic structure electrically coupled to one or more of the plurality of III-nitride regions and the at least one III-nitride epitaxial structure. A Schottky contact is created between the first metallic structure and the at least one III-nitride epitaxial structure.

According to a specific embodiment of the present invention, a semiconductor structure is provided. The semiconductor structure includes a III-nitride substrate with a first side and a second side opposing the first side. The III-nitride substrate is characterized by a first conductivity type and a first dopant concentration. The semiconductor structure also includes a III-nitride epitaxial structure including a first III-nitride epitaxial layer coupled to the first side of the III-nitride substrate and a plurality of III-nitride regions of a second conductivity type. The plurality of III-nitride regions have at least one III-nitride epitaxial region of the first conductivity type between each of the plurality of III-nitride regions. The semiconductor structure further includes a first metallic structure electrically coupled to one or more of the plurality of III-nitride regions and the at least one III-nitride epitaxial region. A Schottky contact is created between the first metallic structure and the at least one III-nitride epitaxial region.

Numerous benefits are achieved by way of the present invention over conventional techniques. For example, embodiments of the present invention enable the use of thicker III-nitride semiconductor layers in comparison with conventional techniques, which can result in devices capable of operating at higher voltages than conventional devices. Additionally, the MPS diode has superior switching characteristics compared to conventional devices, such as high switching speed, low on-state resistance, and low off-state leakage current. These and other embodiments of the invention, along with many of its advantages and features, are described in more detail in conjunction with the text below and attached figures.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

FIG. 1 is simplified cross-sectional diagram of a portion of a merged P-i-N Schottky (MPS) diode, according to an embodiment of the present invention;

FIGS. 2-5 are simplified cross-sectional diagrams illustrating the fabrication of an MPS diode by implanting dopants in an epitaxial layer according to an embodiment of the present invention;

FIGS. 6-9 are simplified cross-sectional diagrams illustrating the fabrication of an MPS diode by forming epitaxial structures in an epitaxial layer according to an embodiment of the present invention;

FIGS. 10-14 are simplified cross-sectional diagrams illustrating the fabrication of an MPS diode by forming epitaxial structures on an epitaxial layer according to an embodiment of the present invention;

FIG. 15 is a simplified flowchart illustrating a method of fabricating an MPS diode by implanting dopants in an epitaxial layer according to an embodiment of the present invention;

FIG. 16 is a simplified flowchart illustrating a method of fabricating an MPS diode by forming epitaxial structures in an epitaxial layer according to an embodiment of the present invention; and

FIG. 17 is a simplified flowchart illustrating a method of fabricating an MPS diode by forming epitaxial structures on an epitaxial layer according to an embodiment of the present invention.

In the appended figures, similar components and/or features may have the same reference label. Further, various

components of the same type may be distinguished by following the reference label by a dash and a second label that distinguishes among the similar components. If only the first reference label is used in the specification, the description is applicable to any one of the similar components having the same first reference label irrespective of the second reference label.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF SPECIFIC EMBODIMENTS

Embodiments of the present invention relate to electronic devices. More specifically, the present invention relates to forming merged P-i-N Schottky (MPS) diodes using III-nitride semiconductor materials. Merely by way of example, the invention has been applied to methods and systems for manufacturing MPS diodes using gallium-nitride (GaN) based epitaxial layers. These MPS diodes can be used in a range of applications that can benefit from a high-voltage switch with low capacitance and very low leakage current in the off state.

GaN-based electronic and optoelectronic devices are undergoing rapid development, and are expected to outperform competitors in silicon (Si) and silicon carbide (SiC). Desirable properties associated with GaN and related alloys and heterostructures include high bandgap energy for visible and ultraviolet light emission, favorable transport properties (e.g., high electron mobility and saturation velocity), a high breakdown field, and high thermal conductivity. In particular, electron mobility, μ , is higher than competing materials for a given background doping level, N. This provides low resistivity, ρ , because resistivity is inversely proportional to electron mobility, as provided by equation (1):

$$\rho = \frac{1}{q\mu N}, \quad (1)$$

where q is the elementary charge.

Another superior property provided by GaN materials, including homoepitaxial GaN layers on bulk GaN substrates, is high critical electric field for avalanche breakdown. A high critical electric field allows a larger voltage to be supported over smaller length, L, than a material with a lower critical electric field. A smaller length for current to flow together with low resistivity give rise to a lower resistance, R, than other materials, since resistance can be determined by equation (2):

$$R = \frac{\rho L}{A}, \quad (2)$$

where A is the cross-sectional area of the channel or current path.

Homoepitaxial GaN layers on bulk GaN substrates also have relatively low defect density compared to materials grown on mismatched substrates, such as GaN grown on silicon, silicon carbide (SiC), or sapphire. Homoepitaxial GaN layers on bulk GaN substrates therefore have large minority carrier lifetime in intrinsic and/or low-doped regions of semiconductor devices that use these materials, enhancing the carrier injection effect for wider base regions. The low defect density also gives rise to superior thermal conductivity.

As described herein, MPS diodes created using homoepitaxial GaN layers not only are able to take advantage of the

outstanding physical qualities of these materials, but also benefit from the structural advantages provided by combining P-i-N and Schottky diodes. An MPS diode is a device structure that can be designed to exhibit the low turn-on voltage of a Schottky diode in the forward direction, and the low reverse leakage current of a P-i-N diode in the reverse direction. An MPS diode can include a Schottky contact with one or more embedded p-n junctions (or P-i-N regions) within the area of the contact. The forward turn-on voltage is dominated by the Schottky portion before the p-n junctions turn on at a higher voltage. The reverse mode of operation is dominated by appropriately spaced p-n junctions. Furthermore, in some embodiments, the same processing used to form the p-n junctions embedded within the area of the Schottky contact also can be used to form edge termination structures to provide edge termination for the MPS diode.

According to embodiments of the present invention, gallium nitride (GaN) epitaxy on pseudo-bulk GaN substrates is utilized to fabricate MPS diodes and/or edge termination structures not possible using conventional techniques. For example, conventional methods of growing GaN include using a foreign substrate such as SiC. This can limit the thickness of a usable GaN layer grown on the foreign substrate due to differences in thermal expansion coefficients and lattice constant between the GaN layer and the foreign substrate. High defect densities at the interface between GaN and the foreign substrate further complicate attempts to create edge termination structures for various types of semiconductor devices.

FIG. 1 is a simplified cross-sectional diagram of a portion of an MPS diode 100, according to one embodiment, illustrating the basic physical features of the device. For instance, the MPS diode 100 can include a III-nitride epitaxial layer 20 coupled to a III-nitride substrate 10. Embedded within the III-nitride epitaxial layer 20 are regions 50 having an opposite conductivity type from the III-nitride epitaxial layer 20, such that the regions 50 have a p-type conductivity if the III-nitride epitaxial layer 20 has an n-type conductivity, and vice versa. A first metallic structure 40 is coupled to at least some of the regions 50 and a portion of the III-nitride epitaxial layer 20 between the regions 50. A second metallic structure 30 can be coupled to a side of the III-nitride substrate 10 opposing the III-nitride epitaxial layer 20.

The functionality of the MPS diode 100 is derived from having one or more Schottky regions 70 and P-i-N regions 60, formed from the features of the MPS diode 100 described above. For example, the III-nitride epitaxial layer 20 can have a relatively low dopant concentration, enabling it to form a drift layer for the Schottky regions 70 as well as the intrinsic (e.g., "i") component of the P-i-N regions 60. The P-i-N regions 60 include the regions 50, which have a relatively high dopant concentration. Depending on desired functionality, these regions form the P or N components of the P-i-N regions 60. The first metallic structure 40 forms a Schottky barrier with the relatively low-doped III-nitride epitaxial layer 20 for the Schottky regions, and an ohmic metal contact with the relatively high-doped regions 50 for the P-i-N regions 60. The III-nitride substrate 10 has a relatively high dopant concentration, allowing the III-nitride substrate 10 to form a P or N component of the P-i-N regions 60 (with opposite conductivity type as the component formed by the regions 50), as well as enabling the second metallic structure 30 to form an ohmic contact to the MPS diode 100.

The characteristics of the Schottky regions 70 and the P-i-N regions 60 can vary, depending on application. Some embodiments, for example, can include a single Schottky region 70 with one or more P-i-N regions 60. Other embodi-

ments can include multiple Schottky regions **70** and multiple P-i-N regions **60**. Additionally, the width **80** of the Schottky regions **70** and the width **90** of the P-i-N regions **60** can vary, depending on desired functionality for the MPS diode and the physical characteristics of the MPS diode's material components. These widths **80** and **90** also can vary within a single MPS diode **100**. According to some embodiments, the width **80** of the Schottky regions **70** can vary between 0.5 μm to 10 μm . Furthermore, according to some embodiments, the width **90** of the PIN regions **60** can vary between 0.2 μm to 10 μm . The depth **95** of regions **50** also can vary, depending on the application. According to some embodiments, the depth **95** can vary between 0.2 μm to 3 μm . One of ordinary skill in the art would recognize how these widths **80** and **90** can be modified to provide the desired functionality.

Region **50-2** at the lateral edge of the second metallic structure **40** can form junction termination extensions, and region **50-3** beyond the lateral edge of the second metallic structure **40** can form edge termination structures, which can be used individually or collectively to help eliminate the effects of field crowding on the MPS diode. Moreover, multiple edge termination regions can be used for a single MPS diode. The size and spacing of these regions **50-2** and **50-3**, as well as the voltage at which they are biased during operation, can impact their effectiveness, and may vary by application. Moreover the spacing can vary as a function of distance from the MPS diode, where the spacing typically increases with increased distance. According to one embodiment, the width of edge termination regions, ranging from 0.5 μm to 5 μm , can be approximately the same, while the distance between edge termination regions increases with increased distance from the MPS diode, ranging anywhere from 0.5 μm to 6 μm . A more detailed discussion regarding edge termination structure formation and operation in III-nitride materials is found in application Ser. No. 13/270,606, incorporated by reference above.

FIGS. 2-5 illustrate a first process for creating an MPS diode in GaN with edge termination structures formed through implantation of an epitaxial layer. Referring to FIG. 2, a first GaN epitaxial layer **201** is formed on a GaN substrate **200** having the same conductivity type. The GaN substrate **200** can be a pseudo-bulk GaN material on which the first GaN epitaxial layer **201** is grown. Dopant concentrations (e.g., doping density) of the GaN substrate **200** can vary, depending on desired functionality. For example, a GaN substrate **200** can have an n+ conductivity type, with dopant concentrations ranging from $1 \times 10^{17} \text{ cm}^{-3}$ to $1 \times 10^{19} \text{ cm}^{-3}$. Although the GaN substrate **200** is illustrated as including a single material composition, multiple layers can be provided as part of the substrate. Moreover, adhesion, buffer, and other layers (not illustrated) can be utilized during the epitaxial growth process. One of ordinary skill in the art would recognize many variations, modifications, and alternatives.

The properties of the first GaN epitaxial layer **201** can also vary, depending on desired functionality. The first GaN epitaxial layer **201** can serve as a drift layer for the Schottky region(s) of the MPS diode and an intrinsic component for the P-i-N junction(s) of the MPS diode. Thus, the first GaN epitaxial layer **201** can be a relatively low-doped material. For example, the first GaN epitaxial layer **201** can have an n-conductivity type, with dopant concentrations ranging from $1 \times 10^{14} \text{ cm}^{-3}$ to $1 \times 10^{18} \text{ cm}^{-3}$. Furthermore, the dopant concentration can be uniform, or can vary, for example, as a function of the thickness of the drift region.

The thickness of the first GaN epitaxial layer **201** can also vary substantially, depending on the desired functionality. As discussed above, homoepitaxial growth can enable the first

GaN epitaxial layer **201** to be grown far thicker than layers formed using conventional methods. In general, in some embodiments, thicknesses can vary between 0.5 μm and 100 μm , for example. In other embodiments thicknesses are greater than 5 μm . Resulting breakdown voltages for the MPS diode **100** can vary depending on the embodiment. Some embodiments provide for breakdown voltages of at least 100V, 300V, 600V, 1.2 kV, 1.7 kV, 3.3 kV, 5.5 kV, 13 kV, or 20 kV.

Different dopants can be used to create n- and p-type GaN epitaxial layers and structures disclosed herein. For example, n-type dopants can include silicon, oxygen, or the like. P-type dopants can include magnesium, beryllium, zinc, or the like.

FIG. 3 illustrates the formation of regions **301** embedded in the first GaN epitaxial layer **201**. These regions **301** have a different conductivity type than the first GaN epitaxial layer **201**, thereby forming the P-i-N structures of the MPS diode **100**. In one embodiment, for example, the regions **301** have a p+ conductivity type and the first GaN epitaxial layer **201** has an n-conductivity type. The dopant concentration of the regions can be relatively high, for example in a range from about $5 \times 10^{17} \text{ cm}^{-3}$ to about $1 \times 10^{19} \text{ cm}^{-3}$. Additionally, the dopant concentration of the regions **301** can be uniform or non-uniform as a function of thickness.

The regions in this embodiment can be formed by implantation, which can be carried out using any of a variety of implantation techniques for GaN materials. Certain implantation techniques, for example, are provided in application Ser. No. 13/240,877, entitled "METHOD AND SYSTEM FOR DIFFUSION AND IMPLANTATION IN GALLIUM NITRIDE BASED DEVICES," the disclosure of which is hereby incorporated by reference in its entirety.

FIG. 4 illustrates the formation of a back metal structure **401** below the GaN substrate **200**. The back metal structure **401** can be one or more layers of ohmic metal that serve as a contact for the cathode of the MPS diode. For example, the back metal structure **401** can comprise a titanium-aluminum (Ti/Al) ohmic metal. Other metals and/or alloys can be used including, but not limited to, aluminum, nickel, gold, combinations thereof, or the like. In some embodiments, an outermost metal of the back metal structure **401** can include gold, tantalum, tungsten, palladium, silver, or aluminum, combinations thereof, and the like. The back metal structure **401** can be formed using any of a variety of methods such as sputtering, evaporation, or the like.

FIG. 5 illustrates the formation of a contact metal structure **501** on some of the regions **301**, including the regions **301-1** and a portion of regions **301-2**, as well as portions of the first GaN epitaxial layer **201** between these regions. The contact metal structure **501** can be one or more layers of metal and/or alloys to create a Schottky barrier with the first GaN epitaxial layer **201**, which have a relatively low dopant concentration. On the other hand, the contact metal structure **501** can form an ohmic contact with the regions **301-1**, which have a relatively high dopant concentration, forming the P-i-N portions of the MPS diode. Remaining regions **301-2** and **301-3** can provide junction extension and/or edge termination for the MPS diode. The contact metal structure **501** can be formed using a variety of techniques, including lift-off and/or deposition with subsequent etching, which can vary depending on the metals used. In some embodiments, the contact metal structure **501** can include nickel, platinum, palladium, silver, gold, and the like.

Although some embodiments provided herein (e.g., the embodiment illustrated in FIGS. 2-5) are discussed in terms of GaN substrates and GaN epitaxial layers, the present invention is not limited to these particular binary III-V mate-

rials and is applicable to a broader class of III-V materials, in particular III-nitride materials. Additionally, although a GaN substrate is illustrated in some implementations, embodiments of the present invention are not limited to GaN substrates. Other III-V materials, in particular, III-nitride materials, are included within the scope of the present invention and can be substituted not only for the illustrated GaN substrate, but also for other GaN-based layers and structures described herein. As examples, binary III-V (e.g., III-nitride) materials, ternary III-V (e.g., III-nitride) materials such as InGaN and AlGaIn, quaternary III-nitride materials, such as AlInGaIn, doped versions of these materials, and the like are included within the scope of the present invention.

FIGS. 6-9, illustrate a process for creating a MPS diode in GaN with edge termination structures formed through the etching of an epitaxial layer. The process can begin with the same steps of providing a GaN substrate **200** and a first GaN epitaxial layer **201**, as shown in FIG. 2. The structure properties, such as dopant concentrations and thicknesses, can vary from those in embodiments shown in FIGS. 2-5 or be similar, depending on desired functionality.

FIG. 6 illustrates the removal of portions of the first GaN epitaxial layer **201** to form openings **601** in the first GaN epitaxial layer **201**. As illustrated, the remaining portions of the first GaN epitaxial layer **201** form regions between the openings **601** and the GaN substrate **200**, as well as between each of the openings **601** themselves. This allows the remaining portion of the first GaN epitaxial layer **201** to form respective drift and intrinsic regions for the Schottky and P-i-N junctions of the MPS diode. The removal of the first GaN epitaxial layer **201** can be performed by a controlled etch using an etch mask (not shown but having the dimensions of the openings **601**). Epitaxial structures forming part of the P-i-N junctions and edge termination structures for the MPS diode are formed in the openings **601**, so the removal of the first GaN epitaxial layer **201** can be designed to stop approximately at a desired depth in the first GaN epitaxial layer **201** for these P-i-N junctions and edge termination structures. Moreover, the removal process may involve multiple etching steps resulting in different depths for different components of the MPS diode **100**. Inductively-coupled plasma (ICP) etching and/or other common GaN etching processes can be used.

FIG. 7 illustrates the formation of epitaxial regions **701**, or structures, in the openings **601** the first GaN epitaxial layer **201**. These epitaxial regions **701**, can have a conductivity type different than the first GaN epitaxial layer **201**. For instance, if the first GaN epitaxial layer **201** is formed from an n-type GaN material, the epitaxial regions **701** will be formed from a p-type GaN material, and vice versa, thereby creating P-i-N and edge termination structures of the MPS diode **100**. In some embodiments, the epitaxial regions **701** are formed using a continuous regrowth over portions of the first GaN epitaxial layer **201** with other portions of the structure, such as regions between the epitaxial regions **701**, characterized by reduced or no growth as a result of the presence of a regrowth mask (not shown). One of ordinary skill in the art would recognize many variations, modifications, and alternatives.

The thickness of the epitaxial regions **701** can vary, depending on the process used to form the layer and the device design. In some embodiments, the thickness of the epitaxial regions **701** is between 0.1 μm and 5 μm . In other embodiments, the thickness of the epitaxial regions **701** is between 0.3 μm and 1 μm .

The epitaxial regions **701** can be highly doped, for example in a range from about $5 \times 10^{17} \text{ cm}^{-3}$ to about $1 \times 10^{19} \text{ cm}^{-3}$. Additionally, as with other epitaxial layers, the dopant concentration of the epitaxial regions **701** can be uniform or

non-uniform as a function of thickness, depending on desired functionality. In some embodiments, for example, the dopant concentration increases with thickness, such that the dopant concentration is relatively low near the GaN substrate **200** and increases as the distance from the GaN substrate **200** increases. Such embodiments provide higher dopant concentrations at the top of the epitaxial regions **701** where a metal contact can be subsequently formed. Other embodiments utilize heavily doped contact layers (not shown) to form ohmic contacts.

One method of forming the epitaxial regions **701**, and other layers described herein, can be through a regrowth process that uses an in-situ etch and diffusion preparation processes. These preparation processes are described more fully in U.S. patent application Ser. No. 13/198,666, filed on Aug. 4, 2011, the disclosure of which is hereby incorporated by reference in its entirety.

FIG. 8 illustrates the formation of a back metal structure **401** below the GaN substrate **200**. As with the previous embodiment shown in FIGS. 2-5, back metal structure **401** can be one or more layers of ohmic metal that serve as a contact for the cathode of the MPS diode. For example, the back metal structure **401** can comprise a titanium-aluminum (Ti/Al) ohmic metal. Other metals and/or alloys can be used including, but not limited to, aluminum, nickel, gold, combinations thereof, or the like. In some embodiments, an outermost metal of the back metal structure **401** can include gold, tantalum, tungsten, palladium, silver, or aluminum, combinations thereof, and the like. The back metal structure **401** can be formed using any of a variety of methods such as sputtering, evaporation, or the like.

FIG. 9 illustrates the formation of a contact metal structure **501** on some of the epitaxial regions **701**, including the epitaxial regions **701-1** and a portion of epitaxial regions **701-2**. The contact metal structure **501** is also coupled with portions of the first GaN epitaxial layer **201** between these regions. Similar to the embodiment shown in FIG. 4, the contact metal structure **501** can be one or more layers of metal and/or alloys to create a Schottky barrier with the first GaN epitaxial layer **201**, which have a relatively low dopant concentration. On the other hand, the contact metal structure **501** can form an ohmic contact with the regions **701-1**, which have a relatively high dopant concentration, forming the P-i-N portions of the MPS diode. Remaining regions **701-2** and **701-3** can provide junction extension and/or edge termination for the MPS diode. The contact metal structure **501** can be formed using materials and manufacturing techniques similar to that of the contact metal structure **501** in the embodiment of FIG. 4.

FIGS. 10-14, illustrate a process for creating a MPS diode in GaN with edge termination structures formed through the formation and etching of an additional epitaxial layer. The process can begin with the same steps of providing a GaN substrate **200** and a first GaN epitaxial layer **201**, as shown in FIG. 2. The structure properties, such as dopant concentrations and thicknesses, can vary from those in embodiments shown in FIGS. 2-5 and FIGS. 6-9, or be similar depending on desired functionality.

FIG. 10 illustrates the formation of a second GaN epitaxial layer **1001** coupled to the first GaN epitaxial layer **201**. The second GaN epitaxial layer **1001** can have an conductivity type opposite than the conductivity of the first GaN epitaxial layer **201**. For instance, if the first GaN epitaxial layer **201** is formed from an n-type GaN material, the epitaxial regions **701** will be formed from a p-type GaN material, and vice versa. In some embodiments, the second GaN epitaxial layer **701** is formed using an epitaxial growth or regrowth that subsequently can be used to form the P-i-N and edge termi-

nation structures of the MPS diode. One of ordinary skill in the art would recognize many variations, modifications, and alternatives.

The thickness of the second GaN epitaxial layer **1001** can vary, depending on the process used to form the layer and the device design. In some embodiments, the thickness of the second GaN epitaxial layer **1001** is between 0.1 μm and 5 μm . In other embodiments, the thickness of the second GaN epitaxial layer **1001** is between 0.1 μm and 1 μm .

The second GaN epitaxial layer **1001** can be highly doped, for example in a range from about $5 \times 10^{17} \text{ cm}^{-3}$ to about $1 \times 10^{19} \text{ cm}^{-3}$. Additionally, as with other epitaxial layers, the dopant concentration of the second GaN epitaxial layer **1001** can be uniform or non-uniform as a function of thickness, depending on desired functionality.

FIG. **11** illustrates the removal at least a portion of the second GaN epitaxial layer **1001** (illustrated in FIG. **10**) to form GaN epitaxial regions **1101**, or structures. These GaN epitaxial regions **1101** eventually will be used to form P-i-N, junction extension, and/or edge termination structures, and are therefore sized and spaced accordingly, with predetermined spaces **1102** between each of the GaN epitaxial regions **1101**. The removal can be performed by a controlled etch using an etch mask (not shown but having the dimensions of the GaN epitaxial regions **1101**) designed to stop at approximately the interface between the second GaN epitaxial layer **1001** and the first GaN epitaxial layer **201**. ICP etching and/or other common GaN etching processes can be used. In the illustrated embodiment, the material removal process used to remove portions of the second GaN epitaxial layer **1001** terminates at the interface of the second GaN epitaxial layer **1001** and the first GaN epitaxial layer **201**. However, in other embodiments, the process can terminate at a different depth, for example, extending into or leaving a portion of the first GaN epitaxial layer **201**.

FIG. **12** illustrates the formation of GaN epitaxial structures **1201** in the predetermined spaces **1102** between the GaN epitaxial regions **1101**. These GaN epitaxial structures **1201** can have the same conductivity type as the first GaN epitaxial layer **201**, with approximately the same dopant concentration as the first GaN epitaxial layer **201** as well. For example, in an embodiment where the GaN epitaxial regions **1101** comprise a p+ conductivity type, both the first GaN epitaxial layer **201** and the GaN epitaxial structures **1201** can have an n- conductivity type. Just as the GaN epitaxial regions **1101** are used to form P-i-N regions of the MPS diode, the GaN epitaxial structures **1201** are provided to form the Schottky contacts of the MPS diode. In some embodiments, the GaN epitaxial structures **1201** are formed using a continuous regrowth over portions of the first GaN epitaxial layer **201** with other portions of the structure, such as the GaN epitaxial regions **1101**, characterized by reduced or no growth as a result of the presence of a regrowth mask (not shown).

Various alterations to the illustrated embodiment can be made. For example, some embodiments can have a single GaN epitaxial structure **1201** used to create a Schottky contact for the MPS diode, while other embodiment can include two or more. Additionally or alternatively, although the illustrated embodiment shows the GaN epitaxial structures **1201** having approximately the same height as the GaN epitaxial regions **1101**, the height of the GaN epitaxial structures **1201** can be greater or less than the GaN epitaxial regions **1101**, depending on various factors, such as manufacturing capabilities, desired functionality, and other concerns. One of ordinary skill in the art would recognize many variations, modifications, and alternatives.

FIG. **13** illustrates the formation of a back metal structure **401** below the GaN substrate **200**. As with the other embodiments disclosed herein, the back metal structure **401** can be one or more layers of ohmic metal that serve as a contact for the cathode of the MPS diode. The composition of the back metal structure **401**, as well as its size and method of manufacture, can be similar to the embodiments described above.

FIG. **14** illustrates the formation of a contact metal structure **501** on some of the GaN epitaxial regions **1101**, including the GaN epitaxial regions **1101-1** and a portion of epitaxial GaN epitaxial regions **1101-2**. The contact metal structure **501** is also coupled with at least one of the GaN epitaxial structures **1201**. Similar to the embodiments disclosed earlier, the contact metal structure **501** can be one or more layers of metal and/or alloys to create a Schottky barrier with the first GaN epitaxial layer **201** and an ohmic contact with the GaN epitaxial regions **1101-1**. Remaining GaN epitaxial regions **1101-2** and **1101-3** can provide junction extension and/or edge termination for the MPS diode. The contact metal structure **501** can be similar to the second metallic structures **501** provided in previous embodiments, with similar composition and method of manufacture.

Examples provided in conjunction with the description of fabrications processes illustrated in FIGS. **2-5**, **6-9**, and **10-14** utilize a process flow in which an n-type drift layer is grown using an n-type substrate. However, the present invention is not limited to this particular configuration. In other embodiments, substrates with p-type doping are utilized. Additionally, embodiments can use materials having an opposite conductivity type to provide devices with different functionality. Thus, although some examples relate to the growth of n-type GaN epitaxial layer(s) doped with silicon, in other embodiments the techniques described herein are applicable to the growth of highly or lightly doped material, p-type material, material doped with dopants in addition to or other than silicon such as Mg, Ca, Be, Ge, Se, S, O, Te, and the like. The substrates discussed herein can include a single material system or multiple material systems including composite structures of multiple layers. One of ordinary skill in the art would recognize many variations, modifications, and alternatives.

FIG. **15** is a simplified flowchart illustrating a method of fabricating an MPS diode with edge termination structures in a III-nitride material, according to an embodiment of the present invention. Referring to FIG. **15**, a III-nitride substrate is provided (**1510**), characterized by a first conductivity type and a first dopant concentration. In an embodiment, the III-nitride is a GaN substrate with n+ conductivity type. The method also includes forming a first III-nitride epitaxial layer (e.g., an n-type GaN epitaxial layer) coupled to a first surface of the III-nitride substrate (**1520**). The III-nitride substrate and first III-nitride epitaxial layer are characterized by a first conductivity type, for example n-type conductivity, and the first III-nitride epitaxial layer is characterized by a second dopant concentration less than the first dopant concentration. Using the homoepitaxy techniques described herein, the thickness of the first III-nitride epitaxial layer can be thicker than available using conventional techniques, for example, between about 3 μm and about 100 μm .

The method further includes forming a plurality of III-nitride regions of a second conductivity type (e.g., a GaN epitaxial layer of a p+ conductivity type) by implanting a dopant of the second conductivity type into the first III-nitride epitaxial layer (**1530**). At least one III-nitride epitaxial structure of the first conductivity type (e.g., a portion of the first III-nitride epitaxial layer of the first conductivity type) can be disposed between each of the plurality of III-nitride regions. As discussed herein, the plurality of III-nitride regions of the

11

second conductivity type subsequently form P-i-N regions and edge termination structures of the MPS diode. Accordingly, the number III-nitride regions can vary, depending on a desired number of P-i-N regions and edge termination structures in the resulting device. According to some embodiments, the number of edge termination can vary from one to seven or more. The edge termination structures can be shaped any of a variety of ways, according to the physical characteristics of the MPS diode and other considerations. Embodiments of MPS diodes also can have two or more P-i-N regions.

Continuing with the method of FIG. 15, a first metallic structure is formed, electrically coupled to more than one of the plurality of III-nitride regions and the at least one III-nitride epitaxial structure between the III-nitride regions (1540). The first metallic structure further can be deposited and patterned to overlap the first (i.e., closest) edge termination structures. The various epitaxial layers used to form the MPS diode and edge termination structures do not have to be uniform in dopant concentration as a function of thickness, but may utilize varying doping profiles as appropriate to the particular application. Optionally, a second metallic structure is formed, electrically coupled to the second surface of the III-nitride substrate (1550), providing a cathode for the MPS diode.

It should be appreciated that the specific steps illustrated in FIG. 15 provide a particular method of fabricating a MPS diode with edge termination structures according to an embodiment of the present invention. Other sequences of steps may also be performed according to alternative embodiments. For example, alternative embodiments of the present invention may perform the steps outlined above in a different order. Moreover, the individual steps illustrated in FIG. 15 may include multiple sub-steps that may be performed in various sequences as appropriate to the individual step. Furthermore, additional steps may be added or removed depending on the particular applications. One of ordinary skill in the art would recognize many variations, modifications, and alternatives.

FIG. 16 is a simplified flowchart illustrating a method of fabricating a MPS diode with edge termination structures in a III-nitride material, according to another embodiment of the present invention. Similar to the method illustrated in FIG. 15, a III-nitride substrate is provided (1610), having a first conductivity type and a first dopant concentration. The method also includes forming a first III-nitride epitaxial layer (e.g., an n-type GaN epitaxial layer) coupled to the III-nitride substrate (1620). Here, the first III-nitride epitaxial layer can be an intrinsic or very lightly doped layer to function as the intrinsic region of the P-i-N diode.

The method further includes forming a plurality of III-nitride regions of a second conductivity type by removing portions of the first III-nitride epitaxial layer to form a plurality of openings in the first III-nitride epitaxial layer; and forming the plurality of III-nitride regions of the second conductivity type in the plurality of openings using epitaxial regrowth (1630). As stated above, removal can be performed by etching the first III-nitride epitaxial layer. Depending on the conductivity types of the first III-nitride epitaxial layer and plurality of III-nitride regions, the plurality of III-nitride regions form the P or N components of the P-i-N regions in the MPS diode.

Continuing with the method of FIG. 16, a first metallic structure is formed, electrically coupled to more than one of the plurality of III-nitride regions and the at least one III-nitride epitaxial structure (e.g., portion of the first III-nitride epitaxial layer) between the III-nitride regions (1640). As

12

with other embodiments provided herein, the first metallic structure further can be deposited and patterned to overlap the closest edge termination structures. Optionally, a second metallic structure can be formed, electrically coupled to the second surface of the III-nitride substrate (1650), providing a cathode for the MPS diode.

It should be appreciated that the specific steps illustrated in FIG. 16 provide a particular method of fabricating a MPS diode with edge termination structures according to an embodiment of the present invention. Other sequences of steps may also be performed according to alternative embodiments. For example, alternative embodiments of the present invention may perform the steps outlined above in a different order. Moreover, the individual steps illustrated in FIG. 16 may include multiple sub-steps that may be performed in various sequences as appropriate to the individual step. Furthermore, additional steps may be added or removed depending on the particular applications. One of ordinary skill in the art would recognize many variations, modifications, and alternatives.

FIG. 17 is a simplified flowchart illustrating a method of fabricating a P-i-N diode with edge termination structures in a III-nitride material, according to yet another embodiment of the present invention. Similar to the method illustrated in FIGS. 15 and 16, a III-nitride substrate is provided (1710), having a first conductivity type and a first dopant concentration. The method also includes forming a first III-nitride epitaxial layer (e.g., an n-type GaN epitaxial layer) coupled to the III-nitride substrate (1720).

The method further includes forming a plurality of III-nitride regions of a second conductivity type by forming a second III-nitride epitaxial layer of the second conductivity type coupled to the first III-nitride epitaxial layer, removing at least a portion of the second III-nitride epitaxial layer to form the plurality of III-nitride regions with at least one predetermined space between each of the plurality of III-nitride regions, and forming the at least one III-nitride epitaxial structure in the at least one predetermined space (1730). Unlike the methods provided in FIGS. 15 and 16, the method of FIG. 17 forms both the plurality of III-nitride regions, and the at least one III-nitride epitaxial structure (disposed between the III-nitride regions) above the first III-nitride epitaxial layer, which can be preferable in light of certain manufacturing and other considerations.

Similar to the embodiments disclosed above, a first metallic structure also is formed, electrically coupled to more than one of the plurality of III-nitride regions and the at least one III-nitride epitaxial structure between the III-nitride regions (1740). As with other embodiments provided herein, the first metallic structure further can be deposited and patterned to overlap the closest edge termination structures. Optionally, a second metallic structure is formed, electrically coupled to the second surface of the III-nitride substrate (1750), providing a cathode for the MPS diode.

It should be appreciated that the specific steps illustrated in FIG. 17 provide a particular method of fabricating a MPS diode with edge termination structures according to an embodiment of the present invention. Other sequences of steps may also be performed according to alternative embodiments. For example, alternative embodiments of the present invention may perform the steps outlined above in a different order. Moreover, the individual steps illustrated in FIG. 17 may include multiple sub-steps that may be performed in various sequences as appropriate to the individual step. Furthermore, additional steps may be added or removed depend-

13

ing on the particular applications. One of ordinary skill in the art would recognize many variations, modifications, and alternatives.

One of ordinary skill in the art would recognize many variations, modifications, and alternatives to the examples provided herein. As illustrated herein, edge termination structures can be provided in any of a variety of shapes and forms, depending on physical features of the semiconductor device for which the edge termination structures provide edge termination. For instance, in certain embodiments, edge termination structures may not circumscribe the semiconductor device. Additionally or alternatively, conductivity types of the examples provided herein can be reversed (e.g., replacing an n-type semiconductor material with a p-type material, and vice versa), depending on desired functionality. Other variations, alterations, modifications, and substitutions are contemplated.

It is also understood that the examples and embodiments described herein are for illustrative purposes only and that various modifications or changes in light thereof will be suggested to persons skilled in the art and are to be included within the spirit and purview of this application and scope of the appended claims.

What is claimed is:

1. A method for fabricating a merged P-i-N Schottky (MPS) diode in gallium nitride (GaN) based materials, the method comprising:

providing a free-standing n-type GaN-based substrate having a first surface and a second surface;

forming an n-type GaN-based epitaxial layer coupled to the first surface of the free-standing n-type GaN-based substrate;

implanting a p-type dopant into the n-type GaN-based epitaxial layer to form a GaN-based structure having a plurality of implanted p-type GaN-based regions with at least one n-type GaN-based epitaxial region disposed between adjacent ones of the plurality of implanted p-type GaN-based regions; and

forming a first metallic structure electrically coupled to one or more of the plurality of implanted p-type GaN-based regions and the at least one n-type GaN-based epitaxial region, wherein a Schottky contact is created between the first metallic structure and the at least one n-type GaN-based epitaxial region.

2. The method of claim 1 further comprising forming a second metallic structure electrically coupled to the second surface of the free-standing n-type GaN-based substrate.

3. The method of claim 1 wherein the n-type GaN-based substrate is characterized by a first n-type dopant concentration and the n-type GaN-based epitaxial layer is characterized by a second n-type dopant concentration less than the first n-type dopant concentration.

4. The method of claim 1 wherein at least one of the plurality of implanted p-type GaN-based regions is configured to provide edge termination to the MPS diode.

5. The method of claim 1 wherein at least one of the plurality of implanted p-type GaN-based regions is configured to provide a junction termination extension to the MPS diode.

6. A method for fabricating an epitaxial structure, the method comprising:

providing a free-standing III-nitride substrate of a first conductivity type and a first dopant concentration having a first surface and a second surface;

forming a first III-nitride epitaxial layer of the first conductivity type and a second dopant concentration less than

14

the first dopant concentration coupled to the first surface of the free-standing III-nitride substrate;

implanting a dopant of a second conductivity type into the first III-nitride epitaxial layer to form a plurality of implanted III-nitride regions of the second conductivity type with at least one III-nitride epitaxial structure of the first conductivity type between adjacent ones of the plurality of implanted III-nitride regions; and

forming a first metallic structure electrically coupled to one or more of the plurality of implanted III-nitride regions and the at least one III-nitride epitaxial structure, wherein a Schottky contact is created between the first metallic structure and the at least one III-nitride epitaxial structure.

7. The method of claim 6 further comprising forming a second metallic structure electrically coupled to the second surface of the III-nitride substrate.

8. The method of claim 6 wherein at least one of the plurality of implanted III-nitride regions is configured to provide edge termination to a semiconductor device.

9. The method of claim 6 wherein at least one of the plurality of implanted III-nitride regions is configured to provide a junction termination extension to a semiconductor device.

10. A method for fabricating a MPS diode in GaN based materials, the method comprising:

providing a free-standing n-type GaN-based substrate having a first surface and a second surface;

forming an n-type GaN-based epitaxial layer coupled to the first surface of the free-standing n-type GaN-based substrate;

forming a p-type GaN epitaxial layer coupled to the n-type GaN-based epitaxial layer;

removing at least a portion of the p-type GaN epitaxial layer to form a plurality of p-type GaN-based regions with predetermined spaces between each of the plurality of p-type GaN-based regions;

regrowing at least one n-type GaN-based regrown epitaxial region in the predetermined spaces between each of the plurality of p-type GaN-based regions; and

forming a first metallic structure electrically coupled to one or more of the plurality of p-type GaN-based regions and the at least one n-type GaN-based regrown epitaxial region, wherein a Schottky contact is created between the first metallic structure and the at least one n-type GaN-based regrown epitaxial region.

11. The method of claim 10 further comprising forming a second metallic structure electrically coupled to the second surface of the free-standing n-type GaN-based substrate.

12. The method of claim 10 wherein at least one of the plurality of p-type GaN-based regions is configured to provide edge termination to the MPS diode.

13. The method of claim 10 wherein at least one of the plurality of p-type GaN-based regions is configured to provide a junction termination extension to the MPS diode.

14. The method of claim 10 wherein the free-standing n-type GaN-based substrate is characterized by a first dopant concentration and the n-type GaN-based epitaxial layer is characterized by a second dopant concentration lower than the first dopant concentration.

15. A method for fabricating an epitaxial structure, the method comprising:

providing a free-standing III-nitride substrate of a first conductivity type having a first surface and a second surface;

15

forming a first III-nitride epitaxial layer of the first conductivity type coupled to the first surface of the free-standing III-nitride substrate;
forming a second III-nitride epitaxial layer of a second conductivity type coupled to the first III-nitride epitaxial layer;
removing at least a portion of the second III-nitride epitaxial layer to form a plurality of III-nitride regions with at least one predetermined space between each of the plurality of III-nitride regions;
regrowing at least one III-nitride epitaxial regrown structure of the first conductivity type in the at least one predetermined space; and
forming a first metallic structure electrically coupled to one or more of the plurality of III-nitride regions and the at least one III-nitride epitaxial regrown structure, wherein a Schottky contact is created between the first metallic structure and the at least one III-nitride epitaxial regrown structure.

16. The method of claim **15** further comprising forming a second metallic structure electrically coupled to the second surface of the III-nitride substrate.

17. The method of claim **15** wherein at least one of the plurality of III-nitride regions is configured to provide edge termination to a semiconductor device.

18. The method of claim **15** wherein at least one of the plurality of III-nitride regions is configured to provide a junction termination extension to a semiconductor device.

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16